

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED at the
CATHEDRAL CHURCH
OF
W E L L S.

[Price Six-Pence.]

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

CATHEDRAL CHURCH

OF

WELLS.

(Price Sixpence.)

U N I O N .

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CATHEDRAL CHURCH

O F

W E L L S,

O N

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1757,

On Account of the late F A S T.

By FRANCIS POTTER, M. A.

Rector of WEST CAMEL, and Prebendary of
WELLS.

L O N D O N,

Printed for JOHN RIVINGTON, in *St. Paul's Church-
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MDCCLVII.

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Preached at the

CATHEDRAL CHURCH

W E L L S

By the Rev. J. W. WELLS

on the occasion of the late

FRANCIS FOTTER, M.A.

Minister of West Church, and Librarian of

L O N D O N

Printed by J. W. Kington, in St. Paul's Church-yard, and by D. B. Colver, Bookbinder in Oxford

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PSALM cxxii. 3.

*Jerusalem is built as a City that is at
Unity in itself.*

TH E Royal Prophet, under the Emblem of *Jerusalem*, hath given us the Plan and Character of the *Christian Church*. And thence infers the Happiness of the People, where *Church* and *State*, which mutually influence, mutually consult, the Interest of each other.

A 3

Love

Love and Unity are the Strength and Beauty of this * *City of God* ; Doctrine and Discipline the Outworks of it. Divided Opinions unsettle the Affections ; and, when unrestrained, the Breach widens, and all Union is at an End.

To obviate these Consequences, St. Paul cautions us to have an Eye to, and † *avoid all those that cause Divisions and Offences contrary to the Doctrines which we have learned.*

Offence and Cause of Division, in a Society set apart by God himself to refine the religious and moral Sentiments of Mankind, cannot but be given by whatever tendeth in itself or Consequences to corrupt them.

Adoration of Images and an Introduction of other than the † *one Mediator between*

* Isa. lx. 14. Heb. xii. 22. † Rom. xvi. 17.

† 1 Tim. ii. 5.

God

God and Man, subtracting from the Homage, which is due from all, *as Men*, to the only true *God*, and *as Christians* to the divine Redeemer and Sanctifier; and the Reveries of absolute *Predestination*, which maketh Sin imputable to the divine Nature, poison all Principles of *Religion*.

The Doctrine of *temporary* Punishments after Death, alleviable by what others may do; and of unavoidable *Destiny*, which leaveth nothing at all to be done, bear down every Sanction and Motive of *Virtue*.

And a Sufficiency of *human* Authority to forgive Sins, attainable by the fruitless Sorrow implied by * *Attrition*; and the fond Presumption of † *Indefeatability*, which placeth the *Elect*, whatever Abominations they commit, above a Possibility of standing in need of Forgiveness, fear the Conscience,

* Conc. Trid.

† Syn. Dort.

and dispel the few guilty Fears, of which, if left to itself, it might have stood in awe.

But it would be endless to single out every Seduction from Faith and Manners, and range them under the respective Opinions, which have at any time occasioned them. It will be sufficient to observe, that manifest Corruptives of Piety and Virtue cannot consistently be admitted into the Archives of a *Society*, whose distinguishing Character is *Holiness*: And that, where they are admitted, they corrupt, and alienate Men's Affections from one another; and affect the *publick* Peace.

Nor can it well be otherwise. For a Deviation from the *Rule* of Faith implies a Want of it: A Contempt put on the Ordinances of God is a Contempt also on his Majesty. And what Hope, that he who giveth little *Glory to God*, should have much *good Will to Man*?

Or,

Or, that they, who make War with *Heaven*, should greatly regard *Peace on Earth*?

Neither is the Gradation unnatural. For of all the Distempers of the Brain, the Influence of presuming to regulate the divine Wisdom by our own, and the Vanity of appearing wiser and better than other Men, are the most wild and incurable. From the Head they descend to, and vitiate the Heart: out of the * *Abundance of which the Mouth speaketh* and the Hands act.

The Pride and Petulancy they produce engender a *Zeal*, that, wanting Knowledge, groweth warm; and wanting Temper, degenerates into *Anger* against those, who think differently. The Way which leadeth from Anger to *Ill-will* is short and declining: The Line which divideth that and *Hatred*, scarce perceivable. Hence proceed *Railings*, *Bitter-*

* St. Matth. xii. 34.

*ness, and all the Uncharitableness of the Tongue, the * little Member, which setteth on fire the Course of Nature, is set on fire of Hell. Of these come Strife and Envyings, whose are Confusion and every evil Work.*

In this Manner doth a Pretence of rectifying the *Plan* destroy the *Balance* of Christianity: Whereby the Dispensation, which was graciously intended to *regulate* the World, becomes an Instrument of *embroiling* it.

The best Intention will not justify an Alteration in the Laws of *God*, or ward off the pernicious Effects of it. Any Defection from him is † *as the Sin of Witchcraft*; and from it every Thought and Action of the Scorners take a Tincture. The restless Spirit, which obeyeth not his Voice, tho', like ‡ *Sampson's Foxes*, it may look different Ways, meaneth Mischief and endeth in it.

* James iii. 5, 6, 16.

† 1 Sam. xv. 23.

‡ Judg. xv. 14.

We of this Church and Nation have found by sad Experience, that Ruin hath * *sprung up from every Fibre of this Root of Bitterness.* And God grant that we may never have any but past Experiences of it ! It cannot however be unseasonable † *to be put in Remembrance of it tho' we once knew this.* In difficult and distressful Circumstances, the Duty we owe to God and our Country demands it. ‡ *For our Brethren and Companions Sake we wish our Jerusalem Peace ; because of the House of the Lord our God we seek to do it good.* Natural Affection and Friendship sublimate the generous Principle, which willeth the Good of all Men ; and a well-grounded Zeal for the Honour and Service of God, awakeneth our Attention to whatever may concern the Interest of the *State* with which that of the *Church* is so closely connected.

Inattention to what *bath* been, betrayeth

* Heb. xii. 15. † Jude — 5. ‡ Psa. cxxii. 8, 9.

an Indifference to what *may* be injurious to both ; which is an Injustice not to ourselves only, but also to Posterity : Nor can the Degree of it be estimated, but upon a Survey of the Nature and Advantages of the *Constitution* under which we live.

The Happiness of the *English* Constitution consisteth in a just Mixture of Power and Liberty. Its *Monarchy* is free and independent, without being absolute and arbitrary. It is supported by the Law ; it is circumscribed by it. The Crown hath *Prerogatives* ; the People have *Rights* ; they mutually bound and secure each other. United in Interest, they are *one* in the Legislature ; and, to cut off Jealousies from *both*, Encroachments on *either* are happily provided against by Laws of their *joint* making ; which preserve the one from sinking into *Impotence*, or swelling into *Tyranny* ; and require and instruct the other to pay all due Allegiance to the *Prince*, and not to betray the Liberties of the *Subject*.

Nor

Nor is the Church, it defendeth, and is defended by, less happily constituted. * *Mercy and Truth are met together : Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.* It is sound of Faith ; it is uncorrupt in Doctrine ; in Worship pure ; in Government apostolical : In all Respects truly primitive and Christian. And † *what Nation is there so great, that hath Statutes and Judgments so righteous, as all this Law which is set before us ?*

Our Jerusalem then, ‡ (wherein the Seats of Judgment and the Seats of the House of David, the Spiritual and Civil Power, mutually assist and support each other) is clearly built as a City that is at Unity in itself. The Unhappiness is, we || *know not the Things which belong to its Peace* : Faction and Party have hid them from our Eyes. And whence

* Psa. lxxxv. 10. † Deut. iv. 9. ‡ Psa. cxxii. 5.
|| St. Luke xix. 42.

these Distinctions and Prejudices? * *Come they not hence, even of our Lusts?*

An immoderate Thirst of Power, if it cannot otherwise be gratified, will introduce a *Corruption*, that confounds all Right in *civil* Affairs; and an Affectation of Liberty in *Ecclesiastical*, which together give Birth to a Spirit of Irreligion and Licentiousness, that must destroy all national Confidence, and open a sure Prospect of Ruin to the best regulated Constitution.

For the debauched in Life and Principles, having, in consequence of such Depravity, inverted the *Apostles* Advice, and † *set their Affections on the good Things of this World*, and not on *Things above*, have not Virtue enough to withstand, or to be concerned for any thing but the Emoluments of it. And are destitute of the rational Courage, which

* St. James iv. 1.

† Col. iii. 3.

will always support those, * *whose Consciences have not condemned them, and who have not fallen from their Hope in the Lord.*

Nor under the Influence of a *party Spirit*, however gallantly they may † *play the Men for their People and for the Cities of their God*, will the good Effects be more than *temporary*; and possibly of very short Continuance. For without the vital *Charity* which is the best Cement of religious or civil Union, the Ruin consequent to *Division* must first or last take place. The destroying Principle within will operate, tho' nothing from without excite it; ‡ *The perverse Spirit, mingled in the midst of it, shall cause it to err in every Work thereof*; and the || *Kingdom divided against itself be brought to Desolation.*

Is it not then full Time to recollect ourselves? And to consider whether this be *our*

* Eccus. xiv. 2.
xiv. 14.

† 2 Sam. x. 12.

|| St. Matth. xii. 25.

‡ Isa.

Case or not? And herein do not our Iniquities answer to *the Face*? The very * *Wisdom*, we glory in, *multiplieth Bitterness*: A possible Evidence of it escapeth us not. We prefer † *Sin the Reproach of*, to *Righteousness* which *exalteth, a Nation*. We give a Loose to Passions, which contribute most to Mischief and Confusion. We even fulfil our Lord's Prophecy: Our ‡ *Foes are they of our own Household*. Why else at this trying Conjunction do not we, who are under national and Christian Obligations to || *love as Brethren*, unite to a Man in the Cause of our Country?

Scenes of Danger awaken to a Sense of Duty and Union. But doth it look like Duty or Union to be busied in trying the Strength of contending *Parties* amongst ourselves, when the common *Enemy* is at the

* Eccus. xxi. 12. † Prov. xiv. 34. ‡ St. Matth. x. 36.
|| 1 Pet. iii. 8.

Gate? And hath almost reduced us to the last Extremity? Is it a Time for private Piques and Animosities? For separate Views and Interests? — On a like Occasion it is true our *Ancestors* seemed to think so. And they suffered for it. For the Advantages gained against them by the * *Romans* were mostly chargeable on *intestine* Jealousies, and Feuds: Which, from a Contempt of *that* of each other soon brought them to the Condition of a † *People where no Counsel is*. Not to meet in Council at all, and to meet only for Strife and Debate, makes little Odds to the *Publick*. The one drew down Destruction on our Forefathers; *God* grant the other do not on us!

The most promising Way to prevent it will be to take *God* and his Providence into our System of Politicks. He can ‡ *still the Rage-ing of the Sea, and the Madnes of the People*.

* Tacit. Agric. Vit. c. xii.

† Prov. xi. 14.

‡ Psa. lxxv. 7.

He can * *raise up a Deliverer unto us*, by whom, if it be his gracious Will, shall *Israel be saved*.

Nor † *except the Lord keep the City* will any other Watchfulness avail. When Destruction was within forty Days of falling upon *Nineveh*, a Prophet of his gave Warning of the Danger, and Devotion hit upon the Remedy. *Prayer and Repentance*, Things worldly Wisdom is little concerned with, turned away the fierce Anger of God: The Politicians and Ministers of that State had no Hand in the Discovery.

Whether our ‡ *Destruction* be coming on as a *Whirlwind*; and *War* and *Want* be the Fore-runners of it, || *we cannot tell: God knoweth*. But we can all tell with how wanton a Contempt every Thing that is good and sacred hath been treated amongst us.

* Judg. iii. 9. † Psal. cxxvii. 2. ‡ Prov. i. 27.
|| 2 Cor. xii. 2.

An open Disavowal of Religion, and of all the Obligations of it, is the distinguishing Character of this Age and Nation. We have * *broken its Bonds asunder, and cast away its Cords from us.* The Consequence hath been, our Passions are become insolent and headstrong. Fornication and the most beastly Impurities more than commonly barefaced. Many noble Families impoverished; the Publick plundered; and the most interesting national Concerns wantonly sacrificed to *Gaming* and Riot. Nor indeed is there an Iniquity in Degree or Kind, wherewith *God* can be affronted, or Man injured, that hath not ranked itself amongst our *politer* Achievements. These are sad Truths, at which the † *Ears* of all *that hear* must tingle. But they must be heard and considered too, if ever we hope to be a *happy* People.

* Psa. ii. 3.

† Jer. xix. 3.

For Vice is the original Cause, and of it come all the Miseries, which involve and infest Mankind. Of this Truth the greatest Empires have felt the Weight; which, while good Manners and a Regard to Religion were made the Measures of Government, flourished irresistible in their Turns, and were made the peculiar Objects of extraordinary Goodness and Protection: But, arriving at the Height of Corruption, as well as Power, have successively been tumbled down, and become as eminent Examples of abused Benevolence and Mercy, as they had made themselves of Pride, Impurity, or Injustice.

And shall the heathen World thus suffer for Transgressions, and the *Christian* hope to escape? May we do Evil and nothing but Good come; or * *continue in Sin* and expect *Grace to abound*? It is great Impiety to suppose it. History and sad Experi-

* Rom. vi. 1.

ence teach us the contrary in *civil* Affairs :
Nor is there a Hint in the *Gospel* whereon to
build a Hope of continuing a *Church*, unless
we act a consonant Part, and conform our
Lives to the Purity of its Laws.

The Church of * *Ephesus*, and six others
mentioned by St. *John*, by means of their
respective Corruptions were permitted to fail.
And shall the Church of *England* dream of
Immortality? Have her Members no Vices
to expose her to Defection? No Corruptions
which may stand in need of reforming? Are
their Sins so trivial as not to intitle her to
Correction? Or her Correctors so indulgent
as to escape Observation? Some of her un-
thinking Sons may fancy so. But our lan-
guishing Mother feeleth and confesseth the
contrary. She seeth herself on all Sides in-
fested. Heresy and Schism wound and maim
her: And the Iniquities of those she has
brought up, disgrace and betray her.

* Rev. ii.

We come behind none in Provocations, let us not be exceeded by any in Humiliation and Penitence ; * *put on Sackcloth, cry mightily unto God, and turn away every one from the Evil of his Way.* For *who can tell*, if the most impious and abominable Principles and Practices indulged and gloried in, have not already filled up the Measure of our Iniquity, but *God seeing our Works, that we have turned from our evil Ways, may repent of the Evil* which He thought to *do unto us and do it not.*

For as divided and wicked a People as we are and have been, *Prayer and Amendment* may cancel the † *Hand-writing* on the Wall against us. Every other Expedient will fail us. As long as our *Lusts* remain, the Divisions which *come of them* will remain too. As long as ‡ *Iniquity aboundeth, the Love of many will wax cold.* Nothing but Reconcili-

* Jonah iii. 8, 9, 10.
Matth. xxiv. 12.

† Dan. v. 25.

‡ St.

ation with *God* can reconcile us to one another. Nothing but Peace with *Heaven* can restore Peace and Happiness on *Earth*.

These Considerations are truly interesting and affecting. No Age ever stood in greater Need of them : And no *Conjuncture* ever brought them so home to us as the present. The one abounds with all the licentious Principles and Practices, which necessarily tend to, and once ended in, Confusion ; and the other forebodes the most deplorable *Catastrophe*, which Confusion so brought on can end in. We are truly sensible of these Things, *God* grant we may be suitably affected by them !

F I N I S.

tion with God can reconcile us to one another. Nothing but Peace with Men can afford Peace and Happiness on Earth.

These Considerations are truly interesting and affecting. No Age ever stood in greater need of them: And no Government ever sought them so home to us as the present. It is one abundance with all the licentious Principles and Practices, which necessarily tend to, and once ended in, Confusion; and the other comprehends the most deplorable Calamity, which Confusion is brought on and in. We are truly sensible of these Things, God grant we may be timely affected by them!

F I W I S



